of an educated ruling class had to no small extent become an actuality.

Under the Ch'ing, moreover, this popular education in the principles of Confucian morality was furthered by the widespread circulation and the public reading of the famous Sacred Edict.

In spite of its great geographic extent, therefore, China proper was essentially one in civilization and government. Political division was seldom morejhan temporary and never permanent.

With all its defects, the culture upon which this unity was built was rich and worthy. It inculcated high ideals in the relations of men to one another, so essential to an ordered and prosperous society; ft possessed and fostered an extensive and varied literature; and it set high store by good taste and by an appreciation of certain phases of the aesthetic side of life.

The hierarchy and the civil service examinations, then, were among the most notable devices ever originated by any branch of the human race.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Underneath the official hierarchy recruited through the civil service examinations was the local government. Most of it was by units which were largely self-governing—such as the village, the family (including its enlarged form, the clan), and the guild. In a certain sense China was a vast congeries of these all but autonomous units, and the hierarchy intervened only when they failed to function or fell out with one another, or when some crime was committed of which it could not but take cognizance.

The picture, too, was complicated by the presence of secret societies, some of them very powerful.

The imperial government acted chiefly as an

umpire between interests which at any time might come into conflict. It provided, too, for the supervision of certain large economic enterprises, such as extensive public works, and for the common defense against external invasion and internal disorder.

The local units were controlled in part on a principle of which much was made in Chinese administration—that of group responsibility. All the members of a family or a village could be held accountable for the deeds of each of their fellows. Pressure was usually brought from above upon the recognized headman or